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TAGS: [PARM](#) [PHSA](#) [PINS](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: ROKG JOINS PROLIFERATION SECURITY INITIATIVE

REF: A. SEOUL 514
[1](#)B. SEOUL 822

Classified By: POLMC Joseph Yun for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On May 26 at 10:00 AM (Seoul Time), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade announced the ROKG's official endorsement of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), an immediate response to the North Korean testing of a nuclear device the previous day (reftel B). Still, the MOFAT announcement never made the linkage publicly, preferring to characterize PSI as a way to address the significant threat that the expansion of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and missiles has had on global peace and security. The ROKG's decision to become a full PSI participant was initially made in the run-up to the DPRK's rocket launch on April 5 (reftel A), but the ROKG postponed announcing the decision out of concern for a citizen detained by North Korea in the Kaesong industrial complex and the threats from the North that such a move by the South was tantamount to an act of war. Given the DPRK perspective, and the ROKG's qualifying statement that it would continue to uphold the North-South Maritime Transportation Agreement, it is unlikely the ROK would consent to being an active participant in any future interdiction of DPRK vessels. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) On May 26 at 10:00 AM (Seoul Time), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade announced the ROKG's official endorsement of, and participation in, the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) as a way to address the significant threat that the expansion of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and missiles has had on global peace and security. Though this announcement had been expected since the DPRK's April 5 Taepoong-2 launch, the ROKG postponed announcing its full participation in PSI at least three times. The ROKG initially planned to make the PSI announcement after the U.N. Security Council adopted the presidential statement following the April 5 launch, but did not; then delayed the announcement hoping that the DPRK would release a detained ROK citizen who had been detained by North Korean officials in the Kaesong industrial complex, which it did not; then delayed the announcement again when the two countries agreed to an inter-Korean dialogue meeting for April 21. This time, one day after North Korea's testing of a nuclear device, there was no hesitation.

[1](#)3. (C) Nonetheless, MOFAT qualified today's announcement by adding that the ROKG would continue to respect the North-South Maritime Transportation Agreement which regulates inter-Korean sea traffic and intra-DPRK sea traffic using ROK sea lanes (reftel A). Previously, MOFAT officials informed us that since PSI is concerned with transportation to/from third party countries or entities, it did not conflict with

the North-South Agreement. The fact that the ROKG reiterated its adherence to that agreement demonstrates its concerns over a negative DPRK response.

¶4. (C) The DPRK's aggressive position on the ROK's joining PSI has been clear and consistent throughout. On March 30, the DPRK released a statement saying that joining PSI was a "declaration of war" to which it pledged to "immediately take a resolute countermeasure." On April 18, the official Korean Central News Agency reported a spokesman for the General Staff of the North Korean People's Army saying that the DPRK would consider "any pressure to be put upon it through 'total participation' in the Proliferation Security Initiative as a declaration of undisguised confrontation and a declaration of war against the DPRK." During the inter-Korean dialogue meeting on April 21 at the Kaesong industrial complex in North Korea, the ROKG tried to tell the DPRK that PSI was a multilateral agreement and had nothing to do with the DPRK, but the North Korean interlocutors refused to discuss it, stating that the issue was outside their concerns over rents and wages at Kaesong.

¶5. (C) Comment: The ROKG's official position is that its decision to join PSI is not related to any one country, especially the DPRK. However, what is true is that the ROK took so long in joining PSI because of the North's threats. PSI, therefore, became a tool to use for the ROK in responding to DPRK provocations. The first occasion was the April 5 rocket launch, but complications over a ROK citizen detained in Kaesong made it awkward. This time around, the ROKG came to a quick decision to use PSI in response to the DPRK's May 25 nuclear device test.
STEPHENS